

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/EGY:DONEWBERRY:CEK
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R 200737Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 115725

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM NEA/EGY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, EG

SUBJECT: HOVING CONTROVERSY WITH MININFO

1. THOMAS HOVING TELEPHONED NEA/EGY DIRECTOR MAY 18 TO REPORT COMPLEX DISPUTE INVOLVING UNDER SECRETARY MOUKHTAR WHICH REPORTEDLY HAS RESULTED IN MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE ISSUING PRESS RELEASES WHICH SUGGEST IMPROPER INVOLVEMENT OF AN AMERICAN (READ HOVING) IN EXPENDITURES OF FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE BY ANONYMOUS DONOR FOR RESTORATION AND TRAINING OF CONSERVATORS AT CAIRO MUSEUM.

2. HOVING BELIEVES THAT SITUATION HAS BEEN MISREPRESENTED TO MINISTER BY FUAD AL ARABY, WHO BEARS PERSONAL ANIMUS AGAINST MOUKHTAR. IMMEDIATE ISSUE SEEMS TO CENTER ON STIPEND PAID TO GEORGE BARBAGALLO (PHONETIC), BRITISH EXPERT EMPLOYED BY UK FIRM PRITCHARD AND SONS. ALTHOUGH ANONYMOUS DONOR HAS QUOTE FROZEN UNQUOTE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS UNTIL BROADER ISSUES RESOLVED, MOUKHTAR PROPOSED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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HOVING THAT BARBAGALLO STIPEND BE FUNDED OUT OF ADVANCE FROM TUTANKHAMUN PROFITS. HOVING SAYS HE RECOMMENDED AGAINST PROPOSAL BUT THAT MOUKHTAR HAD NEVERTHELESS PAID PRITCHARD AND SONS FOR FIRST MONTH OF BARBAGALLO SERVICES AT RATE OF EIGHT THOUSAND DOLLARS A MONTH. MOUKHTAR NOW PROPOSING TO EXTEND BARBAGALLO SERVICES AT SAME RATE FOR

SEVERAL MORE MONTHS.

3. SOME OF EXCHANGES ON THIS SUBJECT HAVE BEEN CONVEYED THROUGH HARRISON OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATES. HARRISON HAS RECOMMENDED THAT HOVING COME TO CAIRO TO ATTEMPT TO QUOTE STABILIZE UNQUOTE SITUATION BUT HOVING IS RELUCTANT TO DO SO AT THIS JUNCTURE IN ATMOSPHERE OF PRESS RELEASES AND POTENTIAL FURTHER BYZANTINE PERSONAL RIVALRIES WITHIN MINISTRY. FYI: HOVING HINTED BROADLY THAT HE IS DISSATISFIED WITH HARRISON'S HANDLING OF SITUATION UP TO NOW. END FYI.

4. HOVING REQUESTED THAT YOU OR SOMEONE ACTING ON YOUR BEHALF SPEAK WITH MINISTER EL SAWI TO GET HIS READING OF THE STATE OF GOE CONSIDERATION OF THIS MATTER AND THAT EMBASSY SEEK TO DISSUADE MINISTRY FROM FURTHER PRESS RELEASES. HOVING HINTED, BUT DID NOT SAY SO EXPLICITLY, THAT HE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR ADVICE ON WHEN AND WHETHER HE SHOULD COME HIMSELF TO CAIRO TO SORT THINGS OUT.

5. FYI: HOVING ESTIMATES ON BASIS OF CURRENT REVENUES FROM TUTANKHAMUN SHOW THAT PROFITS AT END OF U.S. TOUR WOULD BE TOTAL NEARLY FIVE MILLION DOLLARS. HE HAD SHARED THIS FORECAST WITH EGYPTIANS. PROSPECT OF BONANZA OF THIS MAGNITUDE HAS NO DOUBT EXCITED ALREADY EXISTING RIVALRIES WITHIN EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES COMMUNITY. END FYI. CHRISTOPHER

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